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FISCAL YEAR

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ALBERTA HANSARD

G. AMERONGEN
SPEAKER

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ALBERTA HANSARD

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR - 1974-75

STANDING ORDERS:

The Report of the Special Commitee on Standing Orders, received and concurred in on November 5, 1974, amended Standing Order 99 by revising the rules for Hansard circulation. Following is the revised S.O. 99(1):

99.(1) Copies of Alberta Hansard will be made available at no charge as follows:

(a) each member of the Assembly shall receive two copies daily and one bound volume after the conclusion of the session;

(b) the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition shall each receive an additional five copies;

(c) Deputy Ministers of departments of the public service shall receive not more than five copies for the use of their departments;

(d) the Queen's Printer, the Provincial Archivist, and such officers of the Assembly, libraries and news media representatives as Mr. Speaker may determine shall each receive one copy.

PRINTING AND PUBLISHING:

A daily Hansard was published on time for each of the sixty sitting days that fell within the fiscal year, commencing April 1, 1974. The

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volume of Hansard for that period covered 3,482 pages. The system used in 1973-74, whereby transcription of evening debates was published in the same issue with debates of the following afternoon was continued. Commencing with the fall sittings, 1974, an unofficial copy of a full day's debates, which had received only preliminary editing, was provided each following morning to Members of the Assembly. Approximately 20 copies of this document were made by photo-copy process and distributed to Members' offices by the Clerk's staff. (Named after a similarly unofficial Canadian Parliamentary issue, but published on white paper, this publication is called the "blues".) The principal value of the "blues" was to provide Members with an early morning review (in time for caucus meetings) of all debates of the previous day. The official Hansard did not normally reach their desks before 2:30 in the afternoon, two days after the debates, the time at which daily sittings convene.

Printing was accomplished under contract with Jasper Printing Limited, Edmonton, and the photo-offset method from computer print-out copy was maintained from the previous year. An experiment was conducted in the use of the Printer's photo-typesetting equipment during sittings, October 23 to November 6, 1974. While type face was greatly improved the interface between magnetic tape and photo-type-setting equipment was found incapable of producing the required format variations. Thus at commencement of the 4th Session of the 17th Legislature on January 23, 1975, the Printer was directed to resume the earlier photo-offset method.

CIRCULATION:

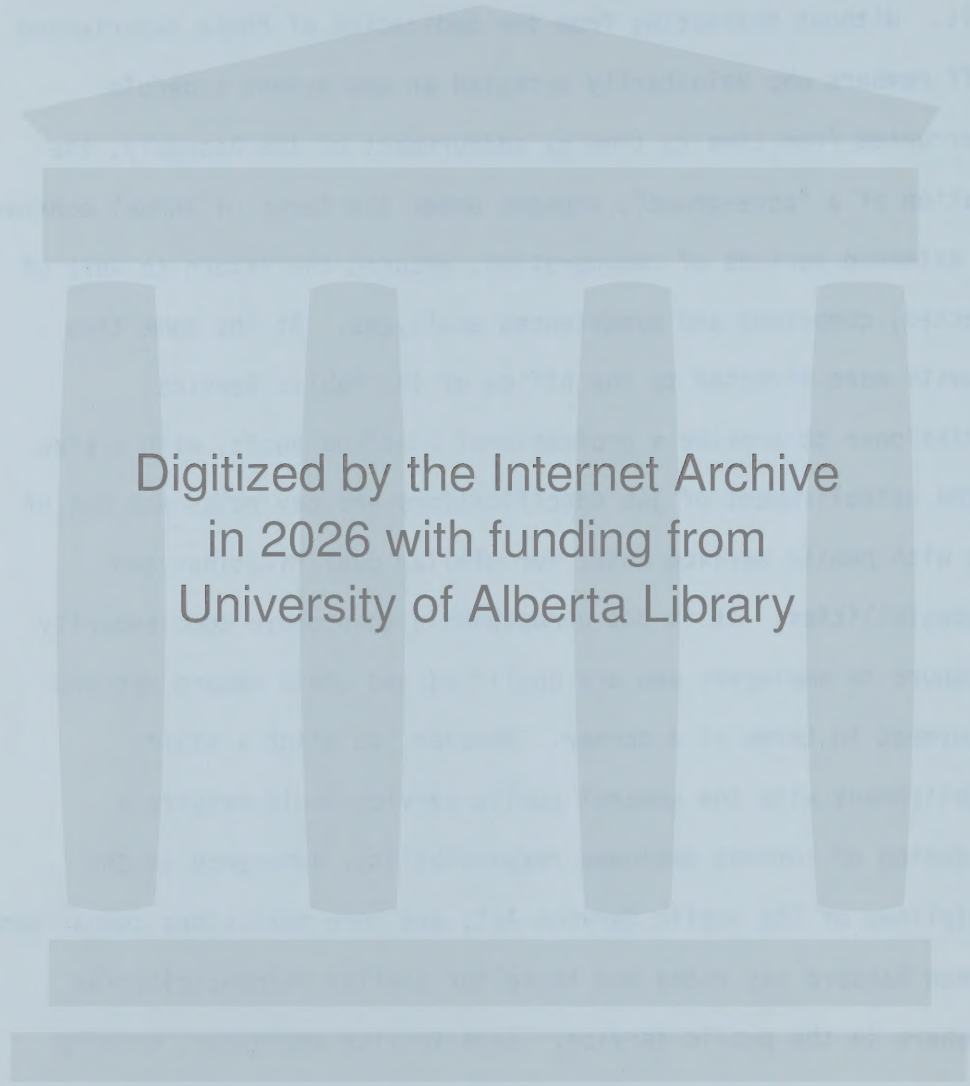
Circulation of Hansard remains relatively unchanged. Paid subscriptions totalled 393. The balance of the print order of 1000 copies accommodated counter sales at 25 cents per copy and the distribution list for Members of the Legislative Assembly and Government Departments. Demand for daily issues of Hansard varies widely depending on their particular content. Some issues are sold out rather soon after delivery; for other issues a residue number of copies are in storage at the office of the Clerk. In addition to the daily issue of Hansard, bound copies are provided to Members of the Assembly and sold to subscribers on request.

EQUIPMENT:

Tape recording, tape playback and computer terminal input was retained as the mechanism for transcribing debates of the Assembly. No marked changes in the system were made. Growing concern with the deterioration of the Assembly sound system led to negotiations between the Department of Public Works and telecommunications media with a view to replacement of the existing facilities. Consequently, Alberta Government Telephones has been engaged to install a modern sound reinforcement and recording system with completion expected by fall, 1976.

STAFFING:

The Legislature has been fortunate in retaining the services of several experienced key members of the Hansard staff on a continuing basis. Without detracting from the dedication of those experienced staff members who voluntarily accepted an employment schedule interrupted from time to time by adjournment of the Assembly, the creation of a "core-group", engaged under the terms of annual contracts and extended periods of remuneration, ensured the return to work of selected, competent and experienced employees. At the same time requests were directed to the office of the Public Service Commissioner to provide a professional staffing audit, with a view to the establishment of job specifications and pay rates not out of line with public service rates for similar qualifications and responsibilities. It is not unreasonable to propose some security of tenure to employees who are qualified and could regard Hansard employment in terms of a career. However, to align a staff establishment with the general public service would require a broadening of current employee responsibility, adherence to the disciplines of The Public Service Act, and more meticulous comparison between Hansard pay rates and those for similar responsibilities elsewhere in the public service. Wage service employees, chiefly typist-transcribers, were acquired and semi-screened for each series of sittings by the Temporary Services Branch of the Personnel Administration Office. Final screening, selection, and training was accomplished under the direction of the Hansard Editor.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FINANCING:

Total fiscal year expenditure for Hansard amounted to $218,566, an increase of $47,000 (27%) over the previous year. Ninety percent ($42,000) of the increase is attributable to wage and fee growth. As described in the section of this report on "Staffing", the extended engagement of the "core" group of experienced Hansard employees in order to ensure continuous excellence of product in 1974 created additional costs. A superficial calculation indicates that the cost of engaging Hansard employees beyond the "sitting" periods of the Assembly in 1974-75 amounted to approximately $24,000. Following is a charted comparison of these data.

H A N S A R D W A G E S A N D F E E S

Expenditure 1973-74	Expenditure 1974-75	Increase in Expenditure	Proportion of Increase attributed to inflation of wages and fees (30 employees)	Proportion of Increase attributed to extended employment (6 employees)
$97,282	$138,750	$41,468	$17,056	$24,412

Total Hansard expenditures are divided as follows:

			1974-75	1973-74
Staffing (all items)	-	$144,264	66 per cent	63 per cent
Printing and binding	-	53,318	24 per cent	23 per cent
Equipment and Sundries	-	20,984	10 per cent	14 per cent
		$218,566		

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PLANNING:

Perhaps some consideration should be given to modifying the Hansard publishing schedule in order to:

(a) provide a "quick-print" service of a semi-edited, unofficial, "blues" copy to M.L.A.'s and Government staff establishment well within 24 hours of debate utterance (possibly by 9:00 a.m. of the day following debate),

(b) provide an official print version of Hansard to all subscribers (including those in the private sector) on a weekly basis or as soon as possible after adjournment or prorogation of the Assembly for any period longer than 5 sitting days,

(c) dispose of the "bound copy service" and leave the matter of binding to the individual subscriber, with Legislation accepting the responsibility for supporting binding requests made by Members of the Legislative Assembly and its officers. It should be noted that orders for bound copies from private sector subscribers amounts to 15 only.

In support of this are three factors:

(1) The observed demand for early copies of transcriptions of debates of the Assembly is limited almost entirely to Members of the Assembly and departments of Government.

(2) There appears to be considerable waste in providing Members of the Assembly with printed official copies on a daily basis (2 per Member) and subsequently a bound issue of a complete Session's Hansard. It would seem that quick and cheaply reproduced "unofficial" copies could serve a Member equally as well as printed copies.

(3) The number of subscribers in the private sector is 393, out of a print order of 1,200 copies, less than one-third of the total. The total amount of revenue from subscriptions and over-counter sales was $5,428.

Implicit in these considerations is the possibility of economy in operation. They could ameliorate the extraordinary demands on the durability of Hansard employees at the many crises periods of a sitting. They could appreciably reduce the amount of overtime required from employees at such crises periods and when a daily sitting is longer than normal. Difficult editing problems would not have to be settled "at once", thus providing more opportunity for thoughtful judgment in composition and reducing the demand for extraordinary intellectual talent. The cost of "quick-print" offset duplicating for "blues" copies is, of course, considerably less than the cost of commercial printing as currently engaged.